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C O N C E R N I N G

The late Application to Parliament for
Relief in the Matter of SUBSCRIPTION
to the THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES and
LITURGY of the CHURCH of ENG-
LAND.

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" If the *Scriptures* be the rule of my faith, indeed and not in
" words only: how can it be so, if I be not to judge for myself,
" what is in it, and what is not? For, if the *determinations* of others,
" are to bind me up, or tie me down, to such a particular *inter-*
" *pretation*; then, it is not the Scripture which is the rule of my
" faith; but those *determinations* of others."

Bishop HOADLY.

L O N D O N :

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DIALOGE

TWO GENTLEMEN

The late Application to Parliament for
Relief in the Matter of Subscription
to the Twenty-nine Articles and
Liturgy of the Church of England

LAND

The following is the substance of the
evidence given by the witnesses
in the case of the late application
to Parliament for relief in the
matter of subscription to the
Twenty-nine Articles and the
Liturgy of the Church of England
as contained in the report of the
Select Committee of the House of
Commons on the subject of the
late application.



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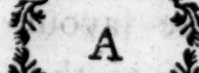
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DIALOGUE, &c.

Mr. FRANKLAND, Mr. HANMER.

FRANKLAND.







S you have not, my dear friend,
 been long out of the country, I
 should be glad to learn from you,
 what are the sentiments of the ge-
 nerality of your neighbours, rela-
 tive to the scheme lately set on foot of petitioning
 to parliament for some relief in the matter of
 subscription to the thirty-nine articles, and the
 liturgy of the church of England?

B 2

HANMER.

HANMER. Why, in truth, Mr. Frankland, the generality give themselves very little concern about it. For though we compliment the land of our nativity so far as to stile it a Christian country, yet there are comparatively few to whom religion is in any degree an object of attention.

FRANKL. I believe there is too much justice in your observation; and I am sensible that many of those who do appear to be in some degree influenced by religion, are far from having imbibed rational or consistent sentiments concerning it. But I wish to know what is the idea entertained concerning the petitioners and their design, by those who do pay some attention to such matters, and with whom you have conversed?

HANM. They are considered by many as a pragmatistical set of people, who aim only to disturb the peace of the church, in order to establish their own notions, in preference to those which have been long established by lawful authority; but others think more favourably of them, and have wished success to their endeavours.

FRANKL. The gentlemen who have embarked in this design are far from having any desire to impose their sentiments upon others; they are only solicitous that they may not be obliged to subscribe a set of articles drawn up
by

by fallible men, and which do not appear to them to be sufficiently supported either by scripture or by reason.

HANM. It may be so; but if you will allow me to give you my own sentiments, as well as those of my country neighbours, I must observe, that I do not see why articles which have been so long established, should now be either altered or abolished.

FRANKL. As to the length of time which these articles have subsisted, that consideration cannot be admitted to be an argument of much weight. If such reasons had prevailed at the time of the Reformation, that event could never have taken place. The superstitions of the Romish church had been established much longer than the articles of the present church of England. But no length of time can sanctify error, or justify the continuance of unjust and unchristian impositions.

HANM. Admitting the justice of your observations, it does not appear to me that the business of subscription to the thirty-nine articles, is a matter so important as some people seem to apprehend.

FRANKL. To you, who are a layman, it may appear so; and others I believe are of your sentiments in this respect. The laity are under no obligation to subscribe the articles, and may, therefore, be little affected by grievances

vances that affect the clergy only. But the point is, whether it be not a real hardship, that all the clergy of a national church should be obliged not only to subscribe thirty-nine articles of faith, many of them on abstruse and controverted points; but also solemnly to declare their unfeigned assent and consent to *all* and *every* particular contained and prescribed in the book of common prayer; though it will be acknowledged by the generality of candid and inquisitive persons, who are versed in such subjects, that there are many very exceptionable particulars in that book, excellent as other parts of it undoubtedly are?

HANM. You speak, Mr. Frankland, as if the clergy were obliged to subscribe to the articles and liturgy. But you should remember, that no man is compelled to subscribe either.

FRANKL. It is true, he is not. After having been educated for a clergyman, if he has any objections to subscription, he has liberty to shift for himself in what way he can. If he can get any other employment, he may; and if he cannot, the church will give him leave to starve without. But it should be considered, that this is too strong a temptation for ordinary virtue; and it must not be expected that the majority of the clergy, or those educated for that profession, can be entirely free from
human

human frailties. After a man has gone through a tedious and expensive course of education, to qualify him for a particular profession, he may find it difficult to withstand the temptation of complying with a subscription which he does not approve, when that is the only method by which he can be admitted into the profession for which he was intended, and which may be the only one in which he can have a rational prospect of succeeding.

HANM. Those who do not approve of the terms required by the church, may join themselves to the dissenters, and officiate as ministers among them.

FRANKL. They would not, perhaps, find that so easy as you imagine. There are at least as many brought up in the dissenting academies for the ministry, as can procure a comfortable subsistence from the voluntary subscriptions of the dissenters; who are obliged by law to pay as much as others to the established clergy, and consequently have the less to spare for their own ministers. There is; therefore, very little room among them for such as have been educated at the universities, and who afterwards find they cannot conscientiously comply with the terms of subscription required in the church. I know a gentleman who was some time settled among the dissenters as a minister, a man of parts and learning,

learning, of amiable character, of good address, and an elegant preacher; and who yet has quitted the ministry for a secular employment, because he could not procure a tolerable maintenance as a divine.

HANM. There may be hardships with respect to some individuals in the requisition of subscription to the articles and liturgy, and yet the insisting on such a subscription may be advantageous upon the whole.

FRANKL. I do not see that there are any advantages procured by the imposition of subscription, which are in any respect sufficient to balance its disadvantages.

HANM. Is not subscription to the articles necessary to preserve an uniformity of opinion among the clergy?

FRANKL. It is certain, that the preserving an uniformity of opinion is one of the chief purposes for which subscription was professed to be originally imposed; and it is equally certain that this purpose has not been answered by it. Is it not notorious, that notwithstanding the articles, there has been a great diversity of sentiment, upon important points, among the clergy of the church of England? Of this the numberless treatises in controversial divinity, written by clergymen of the established church in opposition to one another, are an incontestable evidence. And very few thinking men
among

among them, will ever refer to the articles as a proof of any contested point. They know that men of sense, and such as have a just reverence for the scriptures, as a divine revelation, require better and more satisfactory proof. And as to unity of opinion, it is not I believe to be found even among the present defenders of subscription. Are Dean Tucker, Dr. Randolph, Dr. Ibbetson, Dr. Halifax, Mr. Samuel Roe, Mr. Toplady, and Mr. Madan, all of the same sentiments with respect to the doctrines of original sin, free-will, justification by faith, and predestination? Those who know them, I believe, will hardly suppose that they are: and yet they are all extremely zealous to support the same articles.

HANM. Well, but I would ask, whether every society has not a right to make laws for the regulation of its members? and whether the society itself be not the sole judge of the propriety of those laws?

FRANKL. Every society has, undoubtedly, a right to make laws for the regulation of the conduct of its members; but laws for the regulation of mens *actions*, and laws for the regulation of their *belief*, are very distinct things.

HANM. Granted: but has not every *religious* society a right to require from those who are admitted into it, some account of their reli-

gious sentiments? and do not even dissenting congregations, as well as established churches in other countries, require some test of this kind?

FRANKL. It does not necessarily follow, that because a practice is very general, it must therefore be consonant to reason. There is, however, a material difference between requiring some account of the faith of those who are admitted into the church, and insisting upon their subscribing implicitly a long list of articles, ready drawn up by others. As to the Dissenters, many of them, like Christians of other classes, have been too ready to aim at imposing their own sense of scripture upon others; but their ministers, even when they make formal confessions of faith, at their ordination, are permitted to deliver their sentiments in their own words. But to the honour of some dissenting ministers, it should be remembered, that, from a conviction of the evils which have arisen in the Christian world, from the imposition of human creeds and articles of faith, they have at their ordination refused to make any particular enumeration of their opinions; contenting themselves with making a solemn declaration of their belief in the scriptures as a divine revelation, and of their resolutions to study these sacred writings diligently, to teach the people committed to their
care

care what shall appear to them to be the real doctrines of the gospel, and to endeavour to regulate their own conduct by its precepts. And this has been considered and admitted, by some of the most eminent men among the Dissenters, as a good confession.

HANM. Now you are speaking of the Dissenters; it occurs to me, that even some of my nonconformist neighbours in the country have spoken with much disapprobation of the design of the petitioners.

FRANKL. I think they could not do this without manifest impropriety and inconsistency. If there be nothing exceptionable in the articles or liturgy, on what principles do they justify their separation from the church? And if they admit that there are just objections to some parts either of the articles or liturgy, how can they consistently censure the conduct of those who desire to be excused from subscribing them?

HANM. Well, but to leave the Dissenters, and return to our argument. Were not those who drew up the articles and liturgy, subscribing to which is now so much complained of, men eminently distinguished for piety, learning, and zeal for the protestant religion?

FRANKL. They were, and I honour their memory. But though good and excellent men, they were but men, and therefore liable to error.

Even Cranmer and Ridley, two of the most eminent of the reformers, sullied their characters by being concerned in the burning of Joan Bocher and George Van Parre for heresy. Allowances ought to be made for the age they lived in, and the prejudices in which they had been educated. But still this transaction alone is sufficient to prove, that great as their merits were in other respects, they were not infallible; and consequently that we are under no obligation to submit implicitly to their opinions. Those who could suppose the burning of heretics to be justifiable, may surely be considered as liable to other errors in matters of opinion.

HANM. You speak, Mr. Frankland, of allowances to be made for the age in which the reformers lived. Was not that age a learned one?

FRANKL. It was, Mr. Hanmer, compared with that which preceded it. At the period of the Reformation antient literature was much cultivated, and considerable advances were made in almost every branch of learning. But it is natural that the progress of truth should be gradual; and it was not probable that men educated in a religion so corrupted as that of the church of Rome, should immediately shake off all their antient prejudices; nor have

have we any reason to suppose that they did so.

HANM. Notwithstanding what you have advanced, it appears to me that the removing subscription altogether, would introduce great confusion into the church. We might, perhaps, have different forms of prayer in different churches; at least there would be room given for the admission even of Deists and Papists into the church.

FRANKL. As to new forms of prayer, nothing of this kind need be apprehended, unless they should be appointed by the governors of the church. The petitioners do not decline the use of the present liturgy, though they may wish for a few alterations in some of the more exceptionable parts of it: they only desire to be excused from making a solemn declaration of their approbation of every part of it. With respect to Papists, if the oaths of allegiance and supremacy are not thought sufficient to exclude them, the petitioners are willing to make the most solemn renunciation of Popery that can be required of them; and with equal solemnity are they ready to declare their firm belief of the divine origin of the Christian religion; which must be sufficient to keep out Deists, so far as any subscriptions can do it. For, in truth, no subscription whatever can possibly exclude men of no principle, who
will

will for their own advantage comply with whatever test can be proposed to them. It is one of the great evils of subscription to creeds and articles of faith, that its chief tendency is to make men hypocrites. None are excluded by it but honest and conscientious men, who are on that account the best suited to the sacred office of the ministry. But, in fact, the power assumed of imposing human creeds and articles of faith partakes too much of the spirit of Popery, not to be flagrantly inconsistent in a Protestant church.

HANM. In what manner do you make that out, my good friend?

FRANKL. Why, in this manner: that it is a palpable absurdity for a church which professes itself not to be infallible, to insist on an implicit assent to her articles of faith. If the church of England acknowledges herself not to be infallible, as she has always done in *words*, it follows that she is liable to error. On this principle she should be a little more modest in her requisitions. A church avowedly subject to error, should permit the members of her communion, to examine for themselves. For, in the name of common sense, what difference is there between assuming infallibility, and requiring an absolute submission to her authoritative decrees in matters of opinion? If the scriptures are a sufficient rule of
faith

faith and practice, what right has any man, what right have any set of men, to impose their opinions upon others? If the sacred writings are in truth a divine revelation, they require no human additions: and it is a gross inconsistency in a protestant church, to insist on a subscription to human creeds and articles of faith from all the clergy of her communion. In this respect the church of England exactly copies the church of Rome. The advocates for the authority of the latter say, "The Bible of itself is not sufficient; you must add to it tradition, and the decrees of the church." And, in like manner, the advocates for the subscription imposed by the church of England, say, "The Bible alone is not sufficient; you must add to it the thirty-nine articles."

HANM. But surely, Mr. Frankland, if a subscription to the scriptures alone were sufficient, with the usual qualifications in other respects, to admit men into the ministry, we should often hear very contradictory doctrines from our pulpits.

FRANKL. Your articles at present undoubtedly do not prevent this. Hear Mr. Romaine at one church, and Dr. Adams at another, or in the same, and do you not find them advancing the most contradictory sentiments; and it is the same with respect to many others
of

of the clergy. And, indeed, if I could admit, which I never can do, the right of the church to impose articles of faith, I think very plausible arguments might be urged against the present articles, without enquiring particularly into the truth of the doctrines contained in them.

* HANM. Why, if the church had a right to require a subscription to articles of faith, what objection have you to the propriety of the present?

FRANKL. I do not, as I intimated before, inquire now into the truth of the doctrines contained in them, however justly that may be questioned; but I think they may be objected to on this principle, that they do not appear to be agreeable to the sentiments of the majority of the present church of England. If the imposition of articles of faith were at all defensible, it is certainly reasonable that they should be agreeable to the sentiments of the major part of the clergy of which the church is composed. We may admit, that the majority of the clergy when the articles were first formed, really believed them to be scriptural. But if the clergy two centuries after change their sentiments, I do not see why they should adhere implicitly to the old articles, or why they should not be altered or removed, if the majority of the clergy

clergy judge them to be erroneous. And that these articles are not in general really believed by the major part of the clergy, appears to me extremely evident.

HANM. From whence can you infer this, as all the clergy must have subscribed these articles?

FRANKL. I infer it from the general tenor of their preaching and writings, from which I apprehend a much better judgment may be formed of the real sentiments of the clergy, than from the single circumstance of their having subscribed the thirty-nine articles; which too many of them seem to consider merely as a matter of form, without complying with which they cannot be admitted into orders. It is manifest, I think, that the doctrinal articles of the church of England are calvinistical; the controverted points, perhaps, not carried to so rigid a height as some have supposed; but still upon the whole evidently calvinistical. But will any man who is much acquainted with the writings of the generality of our clergy, for many years past, and with the sermons that commonly issue from our pulpits, take upon him to affirm, that they are consistent with calvinistic principles, or conformable to the doctrines contained in the thirty-nine articles? I think it cannot be affirmed: and that if we may be allowed to

judge of the sentiments of the clergy from their preaching and their writings, by much the major part of them do not believe the articles. I speak not of the doctrine of the Trinity, but with reference to the doctrines of original sin, predestination, free will, and justification.

HANM. You would then, perhaps, wish to have a set of Arminian articles drawn up?

FRANKL. By no means: though I think they would be more consonant to the general sentiments of the clergy than the present. But if a set of articles were drawn up exactly conformable to my own sentiments, I would vehemently oppose the imposition of them; because I consider all impositions of human creeds and articles of faith as unjust and unchristian. And from what I have advanced on this subject, I only mean to draw this inference: that if the doctrines contained in the thirty-nine articles are evidently not conformable to the sentiments of the majority of the present clergy, the absurdity of continuing to impose these articles, is greatly augmented by this consideration.

HANM. You observed, just now, that if a set of articles were drawn up, perfectly agreeable to your own sentiments, you would oppose the imposing them. From the manner in which you expressed yourself, I presume I
may

may infer, that you do not believe all the doctrines contained in the thirty-nine articles?

FRANKL. I do not. I have taken some pains to understand the principles of Christianity, as I sincerely believe it to be a divine revelation; and I have no bias to influence my mind the one way or the other; and yet, so far as I can form any judgment upon the matter, many particulars in the articles of the church of England, are utterly repugnant to the doctrines taught by Christ and his apostles. It is true, I have no right to impose my sense of scripture upon any other man; but neither has any other man a right to impose his sense of scripture upon me.

HANM. Mr. Madan has just published a treatise to prove, that the thirty-nine articles are agreeable to the scriptures.

FRANKL. He has so; but, if I may be allowed to speak freely upon the subject, there is not much more just reasoning in Mr. Madan's pamphlet, than there was honesty in the disposal of the rectory of Aldwinckle. There is, however, an abundant share of bigotry; and this reverend author very confidently and modestly speaks of the petitioners, as "a set of *vipers* in the bosom of the church, who, in the shape of clergymen, "would *knaw out* her vitals:" and very decently

gently considers their meeting as "an attack upon the Christian religion."

HANM. I remember the Aldwinckle affair, of which you speak. But Mr. Madan's conduct in that affair, however exceptionable, cannot invalidate the force of any thing that he may have advanced in support of the thirty-nine articles.

FRANKL. It is very true; it cannot. But when men who are justly chargeable with such *actions*, take upon them to abuse others so grossly for a mere difference of *opinion*, such transactions necessarily force themselves upon our remembrance. He who is so severe upon others for errors merely *speculative*, has no reason to complain of the severity of those who censure him for what is much worse, errors in *practice*. But to quit this subject: Mr. Madan has produced a number of texts, which he supposes prove the truth of the thirty-nine articles. Others suppose just the contrary, and that they prove no such matter. Those who are acquainted with the controversial writings of the Arminians and the Calvinists, or the Socinians, Arians, and Trinitarians, will not find many new discoveries in Mr. Madan's pamphlet. Men of the most distinguished characters, for learning and probity, and a great part of whose lives have been spent in the study of the scriptures, have
not

not supposed the texts so often urged in support of the Calvinistic doctrines, to be by any means sufficient for the purpose. They conceive those texts to be evidently misunderstood. The late Dr. Jortin, a man of genius and uncommon erudition, asserted, that Dr. Whitby, in his famous treatise on the five points, had confuted the doctrines of Calvinism even to a demonstration. All that I mean to infer from hence is, that it is not so clear as the Calvinists themselves imagine, that their doctrines are really grounded upon the Scriptures. To other men, of the greatest abilities and judgment, the contrary has appeared evident. And if none but those who really believed the articles had taken orders in the church of England, it would have been deprived of some of its greatest ornaments. Did archbishop Tillotson believe the articles? Examine his writings, and you will be convinced that there were other things in the articles and liturgy not agreeable to his sentiments, as well as the Athanasian creed, which he confessed he wished the church was *well rid of*. Did Bishop Patrick, Bishop Wilkins, Bishop Hoadly, Bishop Sherlock, Bishop Butler, Bishop Lavington, Dr. Whichcote, Dr. Hammond, Dr. Cudworth, Dr. Samuel Clarke, Dr. Sykes, or Dr. Stebbing, not to mention innumerable others, really believe all the doctrines

doctrines contained in the articles? Those who will be at the pains to compare the writings of these eminent prelates and divines of the church of England with the articles, will be convinced they did not. And it grieves one to see the wretched shifts to which men, great and excellent in other respects, have been reduced, in order to justify their conduct in subscribing these articles. From all which I would infer, that as good and worthy men of all parties have differed so much with respect to these controverted points, there ought in a national church to be a greater allowance for a latitude of opinion. It certainly must be highly prejudicial to the interests of religion, that the laity should have reason to suppose that many of the clergy subscribe articles which they do not believe; and yet the fact is now too notorious to be denied. Their sermons and the thirty-nine articles are often in direct opposition. There is a material difference between a *national* church, and a private religious society. If the established clergy of the kingdom must be burthened with human articles of faith, every principle of reason dictates, that they ought to be more *comprehensive* than the present, and not suited to one sect or party only, and that by no means the most numerous.

HANM. Have you seen Mr. Samuel Roe's
address

address to the public and the petitioners on the subject of the articles?

FRANKL. I have; and of all the defenders of subscription, he is the most admirable. This worthy vicar of Stotfield in Bedfordshire, asserts, that the scheme for obtaining redress in the matter of subscription, is “a diabolical, mischievous machination, contrived, and now revived by the enemies of religion, to serve some jesuitical, methodistical, schismatical, atrocious purposes.” And he assures us, that the right of private judgment is “no Gospel, no Christian principle;” and farther, that every person who doth assert the right of private judgment, must appear to be an enemy to the church; and that every one who presumes to divest the church of this authority (of determining matters of faith) deserves not the name of a Christian. But we may say of Mr. Roe’s remarks, what a very respectable Alderman is reported to have said in the House of Commons relative to the articles: “there is no occasion to take any pains to expose them, reading them is sufficient.” This zealous champion of the Church, the reverend Mr. Samuel Roe, about two years ago, published a pamphlet, intitled, *Enthusiasm detected*; in which he recommended it to the legislature, when to their wisdom it should seem meet, that they would make an example of Tabernacle

tabernacle preachers, by enacting a law to cut out their tongues; and also, by the same authority, to cut out the tongues of all field-teachers; and those who should preach in houses, barns, or elsewhere, if they had not the sanction of *apostolical* ordination and legal authority.

HANM. Mr. Roe's zeal carries him to great lengths indeed!

FRANKL. In truth, the reverend Vicar is rather too hot for these luke-warm times: though he would doubtless have made a capital figure in the days of Bishop Bonner. But I have been informed, that many of the Methodists have lately been very zealous in defence of the thirty-nine articles. I should therefore think, that on this consideration, Mr. Roe should now be inclined to relax a little of his severity. It would be very hard, as matters now stand, if he would not be content, if Tabernacle and Field Preachers, &c. had their tongues only *slit*, instead of being entirely *cut out*, as he originally proposed.

HANM. Perhaps his *charity* would now extend so far. But to leave Mr. Roe, I have an objection to mention against the application of the ecclesiastical petitioners, which has been thought to be very forcible. It is said that the King cannot give the royal assent to any bill calculated to comply with their desires, without violating his coronation oath.

FRANKL.

FRANKL. I know that this objection has been urged, and in particular by Mr. Toplady; but it appears to me to have little weight. It is said, that every King of Great Britain, since the Union, has been obliged to swear at his coronation, That he would maintain and preserve inviolably the settlement of the Church of England, and the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government thereof, as by law established. From hence it is inferred, that the King must be perjured, if he gives his assent to any bill for making any alterations in the church. But surely this must be a gross mistake. The evident design of the legislature by enjoining this oath upon the King, was to secure the church from any alterations being made by the regal prerogative. Whatever alterations may be made in the church by the two estates of parliament, in concurrence with the King, it is still the church of England, *as by law established*. And if the King preserves the ecclesiastical constitution so far, as to avoid any illegal violations of it himself, and to prevent others from violating it; and makes no alterations in it by his own authority, but only by the desire of the Lords and Commons, in parliament assembled, he maintains the settlement of the church of England *inviolably*, as I apprehend, according to the full intent and meaning of the act. It may also

be observed, that the King, in his oath relative to the civil constitution, swears to govern according to the laws and customs of the kingdom. But is it supposed that he violates his oath, when he gives his assent to any bills for repealing laws which were in force at the time of his coronation? On the contrary, we know that acts for repealing old laws are very common. And why should errors be perpetuated in the church any more than in the state? To imagine that no alterations can be made in the church of England, as a national establishment, by the King and both houses of parliament, if errors should be discovered in it, is to suppose its constitution more irrational than that of the church of Rome. And indeed such an idea is contrary to every just principle of government and legislation, and big with absurdity.

HANM. Whatever reason you may suppose there is for granting the design of the ecclesiastical petitioners, there seems now little room to expect that they will obtain any relief, as the House of Commons have rejected their petition.

FRANKL. Their want of success will be no proof of any want of justice in their cause. I have no more faith in the infallibility of the House of Commons, than I have in the infallibility of the articles and liturgy. But I must confess, that I wonder the less at the ill
success

success of the petitioners, when I learn that the first Lord of the Treasury was among the number of their opposers: he being an officer of state for whom the modern representatives of the people have a most reverential regard. However, to do justice to his lordship, he was somewhat unwilling, if we may believe the public papers, that it should be supposed he had affirmed the thirty-nine articles to be grounded upon scripture: which certainly implied a degree of modesty, and regard to truth, very commendable in a prime minister. And whatever doubts his lordship himself entertained of the truth of the articles, he might not think it prudent to encourage the same degree of unbelief in the clergy.

HANM. The rejection of the petition by the House of Commons will be a great triumph to the warm advocates for subscription.

FRANKL. It probably will be so; but it will be the triumph of bigotry and worldly policy over truth and reason. I must, however, acknowledge, that I think Mr. Toplady, Mr. Madan, and Mr. Romaine, whose attachment to the Calvinistic doctrines is well known, are much more consistent in their zeal for the articles, than those gentlemen who are so strenuous in their defence, though they have long preached and written against the doctrines contained in them. Upon what principles they

can vindicate their conduct, I cannot very well comprehend. But some men would defend any church, and any articles or creeds whatever, to which good benefices were annexed, of which they received the emoluments. Our immortal MILTON was so sensible of the hardship of subscription, that this consideration induced him to decline entering into holy orders, though he was educated and intended for a clergyman. His free, ingenuous spirit, could not endure the shackles of ecclesiastical authority. He loved religious as well as civil freedom. He informs us himself, that by the intentions of his parents and friends, he was destined from a child, and with his own inclinations, to the service of the church; "till coming (says he) to some maturity of years, and perceiving what tyranny had invaded it, that he who would take orders must subscribe *slave*, and take an oath withal, which unless he took with a conscience that could retch, he must strait perjure or split his faith; I thought it better to prefer a blameless silence before the office of speaking bought and begun with servitude and forswearing." His words are so remarkable, that they have made a strong impression on my memory; and I believe I have repeated them with exactness.

HANM. I am convinced, Mr. Frankland, that there is considerable force in many arguments

ments which you have advanced; and the affair of subscription, especially on its present footing, appears to me in a very different light from what it did before. And I should be glad to have some further conversation with you upon the subject; but at this time it must be deferred, as we shall soon be obliged, however unwillingly, to take leave of each other.

FRANKL. It is true; and therefore I shall put a period to my observations upon this subject. I have not, my good friend, in the remarks which I have made, taken any notice of the imposition of the articles upon young students on their admission into the universities, or on their taking degrees; or of the imposition of them on doctors of law and physic; which are oppressions so palpably absurd, that it seems hardly necessary to take any pains to point out their impropriety. Nor have I entered into any particular examination of those doctrines and passages in the articles and liturgy, which I think the most exceptionable; as such a discussion would have led us into too large a field. At present, I have endeavoured, from more enlarged principles, to shew the propriety of the late application to parliament, for some relief in the matter of ecclesiastical subscription. And what weight there may have been in the arguments which I have offered, you must judge

judge for yourself. I shall only add, that whatever secular purposes may be answered by assuming such a dominion over the faith of Christians, as the imposition of human creeds and articles of belief, it is to me extremely evident, that the cause of real religion can derive no advantages from it. Error, bigotry, and priestcraft, may require these supports; but truth and genuine Christianity disdain such artificial aids. I therefore conclude, that the gentlemen who have petitioned the parliament on this subject, whatever may be the final event of their endeavours, are not only in the strictest degree justifiable, but entitled to the applause of every consistent Protestant; of all those who prefer the pure light of revelation, to human impositions, and the traditions of men.

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